For Immediate Release **Contact:** Denise Horstman, ext. 262
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NEW ACQUISITIONS ON VIEW THIS WEEK

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) is exhibiting for the first time this week several of its most recent acquisitions. They are in a prominent area newly reserved for this purpose on CMA's second gallery level, at a crossroads for entering galleries of ancient, contemporary, or Islamic works.

Dominating the three-month display will be two companion pieces of furniture by the Firm of [Duncan] Phyfe and Son. This mid-19th-century ensemble, *Sideboard and Cellarette*, veneered in boldly patterned rosewood, is the first acquisition by CMA of a work by this well-known American furniture maker. Also on view are drawings by French painter Girodet (1767–1824) and African-American sculptor Sargent Johnson (1888–1967); a handscroll by Chinese painter Yu Zhiding (1647–after 1709); and Tibetan Buddhist paintings of the 11th and 12th centuries.

New York's Duncan Phyfe (born Scotland, 1768–1854) first produced furniture similar to English Sheraton pieces, simple in design, with straight lines, thin legs, and classical, carved ornamentation. His work evolved, with 19th-century tastes, to the more imposing Empire style of CMA's new set, known as Phyfe's "Grecian plain style," virtually devoid of carved decoration. The trays inside the sideboard, meant for carrying bottles up from the wine cellar, are rare in American furniture. The cellarette (a cabinet for wines and liquor) is finished inside with mahogany. Except for their flamboyant rosewood veneers, this finely crafted pair is practically identical to mahogany-veneered furnishings at the landmark Millford Plantation in South Carolina, acquired from Phyfe in 1841.

The drawing by Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson called *The Oath of the Seven Chiefs Against Thebes* (about 1800) remained in his possession — hanging in Girodet's bedroom in its present frame — until he died and left it to his niece in his will. It remained in her family until going on the market at a Paris auction in 1991. Though less familiar to U.S. audiences than other French artists, Girodet is one of the best-known neoclassical French painters. This drawing in black and white chalk on light brown paper was probably a study for a large-scale oil painting, and is filled with the action and drama of a sweeping narrative. Well read in ancient Greek and Latin literature, Girodet selected a climactic passage from the tragedy *Seven Against Thebes* by the classical playwright Aeschylus. In the scene, warriors

from Argos swear together on a slaughtered bull to defeat Thebes in a war born of the rivalry between two sons of King Oedipus.

This drawing joins other Girodet drawings in the CMA collection, among them a much different work depicting *The Meeting of Orestes and Hermione*, focusing on the intimate interaction of just three characters, now on view as part of the major exhibition **Master Drawings from the Cleveland Museum of Art** (on view through Oct. 15).

Sargent Claude Johnson, considered the most significant African-American sculptor of his generation, created the drawing *Abstract* in about 1938. It is closely related to his 1938 lithograph, *White and Black*, and incorporates similar recognizable imagery, such as an African-American woman and strings of beads. Johnson came to prominence through exhibitions developed and supported by the Harmon Foundation, a New York-based organization that promoted African-American artists nationally in the 1920s and '30s. Much of Johnson's work is in San Francisco, where he grew up, in the collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. This is CMA's first acquisition of a work by him.

A gap in the museum's internationally renowned Chinese painting collection has been filled with the acquisition of Yu Zhiding's *Cleansing Medicinal Herbs in the Stream on a Spring Day* (dated 1703). It is CMA's first portrait by this painter of many of the historic figures of his time. The brightly painted handscroll's principal subject is Chinese scholar-official Shi Shenyi (1661–?), a poet who was interested in medicine, perhaps because his own health was poor. Clad in a lavender robe, he reclines on a terrace overlooking a scene in which his young servant is washing a fungus after gathering a basket of medicinal herbs. Yu Zhiding's reverential portrayal of Master Shi, surrounded by peach blossoms, bamboos, magnolias, and other flowers and trees symbolic of his admirable traits, is set among rocks and hills painted in the "blue-green style" used by Chinese painters to convey heavenly realms.

With its acquisition of two of the earliest Western Tibetan Buddhist paintings known, CMA becomes one of the few collections outside Asia to represent Western Tibetan traditions well. They join two 11th-century sculptures from the Western Himalayas already in the collection. One of the new acquisitions is a temple banner painting, or *thangka*, called *Seated Amitabha with Attendants*, left unfinished in about the 12th century in the Tabo Monastery. The artist's preliminary ink drawing is visible around the white, red, and black colors that were applied. The second painting, *Preaching Buddha*, is an 11th-century miniature from Tholing Monastery. A royal connection unites these paintings and the

museum's bronze *Standing Buddha*, which is considered one of the most important and beautiful Himalayan bronzes to survive. The Tibetan king Yesheö ordered the founding of both the Tabo and Tholing monasteries; the name of his son, Lhatsun Naga-raja, is inscribed on the base of CMA's bronze. (CMA's *Seated Buddha*, also from the Western Himalayas, is currently off view because of space constraints in the museum's Asian galleries.)

Other Works Entering the Collection

- *Landscape with Boats* by pop artist Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923–1997) was given by the Helen Greene Perry Charitable Trust in honor of director Katharine Lee Reid. This is the first gift to CMA in Mrs. Reid's honor. Mrs. Perry collected numerous Chinese paintings and later bequeathed them to the museum in collaboration with former director Sherman E. Lee, father of Mrs. Reid. This late, large-scale print (1996), inspired by Chinese Song-dynasty mountain views, was selected in light of these connections.
- A plate made about 1920 with enamel decoration by French studio glassmaker Maurice Marinot (1882–1960), a contemporary of Lalique, was given by the Foster Family Foundation and the Trideca Society, a CMA affiliate group supporting the decorative arts.
- A Chinese woman's silk robe (about 1770–80) is brilliantly decorated with 25 symbolic flowers of all the seasons. This is a rare example — unlike any in other U.S. museums — of a well-preserved Chinese robe that was meant for private, rather than imperial court, wear.
- An early, fauve-inspired *Self-Portrait* in watercolor and black crayon (about 1917) is by William Sommer, one of Cleveland's most important and best-known artists (1867–1949).
- *Man, Spirit, and Mask* is a 1999 print triptych by African-American artist Willie Cole (born 1955).
- Other purchases include photographs by Jeff Brouws, Lynn Geesaman, and Abelardo Morrell — contemporary photographers whose works have garnered recent solo shows here; prints by José Posada, Elizabeth Catlett, and other modern Mexican artists; and a rare carved ivory comb surviving from the Sunga Period in India (2nd century BC to 1st century AD).

For more information about the CMA and its events, call **1-888-CMA-0033** or visit **www.clevelandart.org**.

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